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the WORLD COUNCIL of CHURCHES (in process of formation)
the INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL
the WORLD ALLIANCE for INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH THE CHURCHES
the WORLD ALLIANCE of YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
the WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
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No. 1 — Fourteenth Year — January 10, 1947

JAPAN

The United Church Faces Its Task

According to news just received, the Geneva Assembly of the United Church of Christ in Japan took place on October 15-17, 1946 in the Doshisha University in Tokyo. It was the first assembly to be held in which the representatives were democratically elected. Three hundred delegates attended. The Assembly was presided over by the Moderator, Rev. M. Kozaki.

According to the first post-war official statistics there are now 18 Regional Conference Areas, 1,184 congregations, 1,459 clergymen and 184,468 church members; 490 church buildings have been destroyed during the war.

The Salvation Army, the majority of the Episcopal (Anglican) Church of Japan, and some of the revivalistic groups, have left the United Church.

Constitution and Creed - There was considerable anxiety lest the unity of the Church would be imperiled by uncompromising differences regarding the creed as the United Church was born amid all the inconveniences and adversities of a wartime situation and the denominations did not have the opportunity to make an amicable exchange of thought as a preparation for union. Now, after a thorough review of all positions, a statement was brought up giving a declaration that the faith of the Church of Christ is contained in the Apostles' Creed and the other historical creeds of Christendom. This statement was vigorously challenged by those in the Assembly who wanted a more definite statement, but it was generally recognised that a more complete statement of faith could only be composed after a longer period of fellowship in the new relationship. Finally it was accepted with only one dissenting vote, thus showing a surprising amount of agreement and will towards unity.

Shinto Shrines - The Assembly protested vigorously to the Japanese Government against the use of community pressure involved in the collection of fees for shrines. Local officials all over the country, claiming to act in private capacity, were continuing the familiar collection for shrines. The protest claimed that this practice was a contravention of the new Constitution which distinctly forbids state support of religion.

Theological Education - The Assembly confirmed the unique position of the Union Theological Seminary in Tokyo as the united Church's institution. The fact

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that other theological seminaries are simply sanctioned is a source of some unrest. Graduates of all seminaries, however, may enter the ministry of the Church. The Committee selected to pass on the qualifications for candidates for the ministry is a very representative committee.

Restoration of Destroyed Churches - The Restoration Committee has been blocked at almost every turn in its planning because of the rigid economic and banking controls established recently to prevent inflation. The Committee was able to report the promise of 25 Quonset Huts from the American boards and the possibility of further cash contributions. The Assembly felt that the seriousness of the problem warranted a strengthening of the personnel of the Committee, increasing its scope of representation.

Church Women - The women of the Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe who attended the Assembly gathered for a morning session. Mrs. Hasegawa sounded the challenge to all to take their places in the work of the new united Church and to rebuild for Japan a strong woman's unit, so that full use may be made in the future of the special contribution women have to make to the programme of the Church.

Social Emphasis - Christian social workers were invited and were free to ask questions on the programme and policies of the united Church as well as discussing ways and means of handling the almost insurmountable problems of youth delinquency, war orphans, and repatriates. All come to the conclusion that the great need at present was a fully accredited training school or centre at which large groups of young people would be trained for this specialised kind of work. The conditions laid down by the Restoration Committee that the new temporary church buildings should be used not only for worship services but also for week-day community programmes and relief projects raised many questions. Many asked that plans and help be given them and invited specialists to visit their churches to assist in setting up worthwhile programmes.

A special committee was organised to assist the repatriate clergymen, many of whom return to their homeland literally in rags. The rural evangelism department is consolidating an approach to rural Japan which offers unprecedented opportunities. The Assembly gave its solid sanction to a Laymen's Group.

The atmosphere of the sessions was serious, almost grim. Physical energy was at low ebb, the struggle for daily living had drained greatly the spiritual reserves. But in contrast to its previous wartime disfavour, all were aware of the unparalleled acceptance Christianity had today but all were still too exhausted to meet the grand challenge of the opportunity. For five years the Church has been cut off from the stream of world Christianity. Except, therefore, there be a grim resolve on the part of its clergy and the Churches, the very size of the load may be too much for the new untried machinery.

The Assembly was to be an evangelistic Assembly and the really high moments came after adjournment. Three large mass meetings were held on October 17, national holiday. Dr. Kagawa was the principal evening speaker. E.P.S. GENEVA

KOREA

Towards Church Unity

The following is taken from a survey published in the "International Review of Missions" (January 1947) and shows a striking feature of church life in Korea today:

"The Churches in Korea have passed through the somewhat anomalous experience of a church union which lasted exactly two weeks, from the day in June 1945 when it was imposed upon them by the Japanese authorities, to its voluntary dissolution

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at the Japanese surrender in mid-August. The possibilities of union have, however, been further discussed by the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Holiness Church and the Salvation Army; but although an attempt was made at the mass meeting which clebrated the return of Korean Christian leaders from overseas to bring a united Church into being, more realistic counsels have prevailed. The wisdom of restoring denominational sovereignties in the first place, as the basis on which to negotiate a possible union, more particularly as discussions for the time being are restricted to the southern region, has been generally recognised. Much emphasis is laid, in any event, on the reminder that a good many Christian institutions in Korea are already established on a union basis (Ewha College, Severence Union Medical College, etc.) all of which are described as rapidly returning to the status of real Christian institutions with active Christian programmes". E.P.S.Geneva

The 1947 Meeting of the International Missionary Council

The Ad Interim Committee of the International Missionary Council, at its meeting in Geneva in February 1946, in deciding that the full Committee of the Council should meet in 1947, laid special emphasis upon "the desirability of relating the essential business of the meeting to a study of fundamental missionary principles". According to the announcement of this important gathering, which will meet in Canada from July 7-19, 1947, it is hoped that three main purposes will be achieved:

1) To enable to see more clearly and comprehensively than has hitherto been possible the ways in which the war has affected the work of the Church throughout the world;

2) To help to "discover" the meaning and relevance of the Christian Gospel in the context of contemporary confusion and need;

3) To re-examine fundamental missionary principles and policies in the light of past experience and changing conditions; and, in humble dependence upon God, to seek for a plan of action for the whole missionary enterprise that will enable both the Younger and Older Churches to go forward together with renewed vision and fresh confidence in their common task - the winning of mankind for Christ.

The programme of the meeting will be based on the general theme: Jesus Christ and Our World. Its keynote throughout will be evangelism as the common task of the Younger and Older Churches - the "urgency of the missionary task in the contemporary world and its consequences for the partnership of the Younger and Older Churches in the discharge of the Great Commission".

The programme is divided in three parts: 1. After the War - An Enquiry (July 7-10) - 2. The Christian Gospel in the World Today (July 11-13) - 3. The Church - Living and Growing (July 14-17).

This will call for a study of "Fellowship in the Gospel - a living local Church as the true instrument of evangelism; and an effort will be made to illustrate this essential truth by practical accounts of living Churches in action in various condition in different parts of the world... Witness to the Gospel is regarded as the Church's primary responsibility; traditional methods must be re-examined in the light of changing conditions."

The last two days will be employed in the determination of immediate steps to be taken in carrying out the recommendations of the various sessions.

"The 1947 meeting of the International Missionary Council will bring together from the ends of the earth a company of men and women who represent the world-wide

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Church of Christ...They will meet in a world baffled and bewildered by unsolved (and apparently insoluble) problems, a world which seems incapable of finding the way to peace, security, and international community. In such a world the mere fact of the existence of the universal Church is of profound significance. A representative gathering of the Church universal is laden with incalculable possibilities". E.P.S. Geneva

ITALY

Religious Liberty in Danger

The peace treaty with Italy which will be signed in February 1947, contains a clause stating that Italy will be obliged "to take the necessary steps in order to ensure to any person...irrespective of race, sex, language and religion, the exercise of the rights of man, and the fundamental liberties, including...freedom of religion."

The Commission charged to draw up the new Constitution has, however, adopted an article proposed by the Christian Democratic party which states: "Relations between State and Church are regulated by the Lateran pacts".

Now there is a very real contradition between these two provisions. All those who cherish the cause of religious liberty must hope that this article will not pass into the Constitution.

For the Lateran Agreement provides that "the Roman Catholic faith is the sole religion of the Italian State", thus destroying the equality of all creeds before the Law of the State and providing for many privileges for the "State religion". One of these privileges is that the teaching of the State religion is compulsory in all public schools and an elaborate procedure is necessary for non Catholic parents who do not want their children to follow such teaching. Discrimination is made against citizens who have once belonged to the Roman Catholic priesthood, and they are forbidden to enter as teachers in any public school of the State. All citizens, irrespective of their personal faith, are compelled to contribute financially, through taxation, to the activities of the Roman Catholic Church. E.P.S.Geneva

The Authority and Significance of the Bible for the Christian Unity

On January 5, 1947 an ecumenical study conference opened at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, near Geneva, on "The Authority and Relevance of the Social and Political Message of the Bible Today". Some 25 people are taking part in this conference, representing the Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican and Orthodox Churches from Denmark, Germany, England, France, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the United States. The conference will last for four days and is presided over by Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

Mr. Ehrenström, Director of the Study Department of the World Council, in his opening speech emphasized the fact that our task today is that of strengthening the ecumenical movement's acknowledgement of Holy Scripture. "The Bible is the book of the militant Una Sancta". The ecumenical revival of our time "will be founded on the Bible, or will not exist". For the Bible proclaims the only event of really world-shaking significance: the direct intervention of God in human histroy. That is why recognition of the Bible is a sure sign that the Oekumene has a sense of world responsibility.

The lecturers on the first day of the conference were Professor Karl Barth (Basel), of the Reformed Church, and Professor Anders Nygren (Lund) of the Lutheran

Church of Christ...They will meet in a world baffled and bewildered by unsolved (and apparently insoluble) problems, a world which seems incapable of finding the way to peace, security, and international community. In such a world the mere fact of the existence of the universal Church is of profound significance. A representative gathering of the Church universal is laden with incalculable possibilities". E.P.S. Geneva

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Karl Barth summarised his remarks in 12 points, culminating in the assertion that the ecumenical unity of the Churches and of their theologians is either a truth or an illusion, according to whether they accept the authority of the Bible. The true understanding of this authority is founded on grateful recollection of what we have already heard of God's Word, and in the joyful expectation of what we are still to hear. "The Christian community stands and falls on the presence and lordship of Christ in the authority of the Bible". Without the authority of the Bible the Christian community and its message would become lifeless, and theology would become mere religious science. Theology is only really theology if "it makes the authority of the Bible a reality in the Christian community and in the world, and makes this authority fruitful". Ecumenical unity, within the framework of an ecumenical study conference, depends on the extent to which this conference can give a united answer to the fundamental questions of the authority of the Bible. This condition must be fulfilled, if the question of the social and political message of the Bible is to be effectively solved.

Professor Nygren emphasised that the Bible bears witness as the book of the divine revelation of God's active intervention in human life. Christian faith is a living faith only if it is seized and formed by the power of the Gospel. "But the Gospel is the message and the continuation of this fundamental action by God, which reaches its highest point in Jesus Christ". The Bible is so great and so overwhelming, that it cannot be grasped by a single generation. That is why the Bible remains uncomprehended and untried. Each generation "stands in a fresh relationship towards the message of the Bible, in a fresh commitment to the Bible". This ever-changing commitment of Christians to the Bible means freedom from any merely human interpretation of it. It also avoids the danger of becoming congealed in mere tradition. The liberation from slavery, which has been experienced in the Occupied Countries and by all who have been imprisoned, makes it strikingly clear what is meant by the liberation of Christians from the power of sin through the dynamic message of the Bible. E.P.S.Geneva

AUSTRIA Pastoral Letter, 1947

The Bishop of the Evangelical Church in Austria, Dr. Gerhard May, sent a pastoral letter to the Evangelical congregations at the new year. We quote some of the essential passages.

"Peace and freedom have still not come to our dear country. We are all longing for them for the distress is great. Nevertheless our hearts are filled with gratitude: 'It is through the goodness of God that we have not entirely perished'. In our Church things are being slowly put in order. God's Word, His consolation and His counsel are preached more enthusiastically and received more gladly by old and young; thank God, that His mercy towards us knows no end. Many congregations still have no pastor. Pray to God for true spiritual leaders and shepherds...

"We thank all who, in their great loyalty and in spite of their own distress, have recognised the distress and the tasks of the Church as their own responsibility, and have faced that responsibility, and are still facing it, through their prayers, their work and their self-sacrifice. We are thinking in particular gratitude of the Churches and the Christians in other lands, whose generous gifts and helpful intervention have saved our lives and our power to work and enabled us to continue and to extend our work in the Church.

"Our hearts are moved with longing for two things: for justice and for love. We are filled with serious anxiety because our people, whose sense of justice was

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"Our hearts are moved with longing for two things: for justice and for love. We are filled with serious anxiety because our people, whose sense of justice was

deliberately perverted before, are still waiting to see that compelling example of justice which they need as a moral basis. Many are still waiting for injustice to be made good. We spiritual workers know that many are ready for repentance and that the nation expects repentance. But the people do not understand it, when those who were not guilty, but merely weak, are treated like criminals. The many people of goodwill, who are determined on new ways, cannot understand why even today espionage, calumny, revenge (often from the lowest motives) are tolerated and receive attention. As guardian of the moral needs of the people the Church raises the cry for justice.

"It is a great thing if a nation lives in justice. But Christ demands more than justice and our hearts know that He is right: the world needs nothing as much as love. We cannot live without the love which gives and forgives, bears and cherishes. That is why we ask you: 'Let the love of Christ dwell richly among you'. Recognise, that the special works of the Church are the works of love and mercy....

"To a large extent we have forgotten how to trust people. But Christians never despair. Kingdoms may break up, nations pass away, human power may prove powerless: we trust and build upon God, for His is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory for ever and ever". E.P.S.Geneva

UNITED STATES — Sunday Schools and Visual Education

A conference, sponsored by the World's Sunday School Association, took place on November 21, 1946 at New York. There were 51 attendants, representing 16 different countries. The aim of the conference was to initiate a reviewing service by evaluating projected visual material in the field of religious education from the point of view of foreign countries where they might be shown. Permanent standards of evaluation can then be set up with regard to the needs and peculiarities of each of these countries. A regular reviewing service has been established, whereby weekly meetings for reviewing projected visual material will be held. The reviews will be written up for publication and distributed to Local Councils of Religious Education, Mission Boards and other agencies concerned.

E.P.S.Geneva

UNITED STATES — The New Head of the Federal Council

Mr. Charles P. Taft, Cincinnati and prominent Protestant Episcopal layman, was unanimously elected president of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America at Seattle on December 6th, 1946. Mr. Taft, who succeeds Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, is the first laymen ever to hold the post. He is the son of the late William Howard Taft, 26th President of the United States. He is chairman of the Friends of the World Council of Churches and also member of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches. His election is seen as a part of a movement to expand the role of laymen in directing the Council's programme,

E.P.S.Geneva

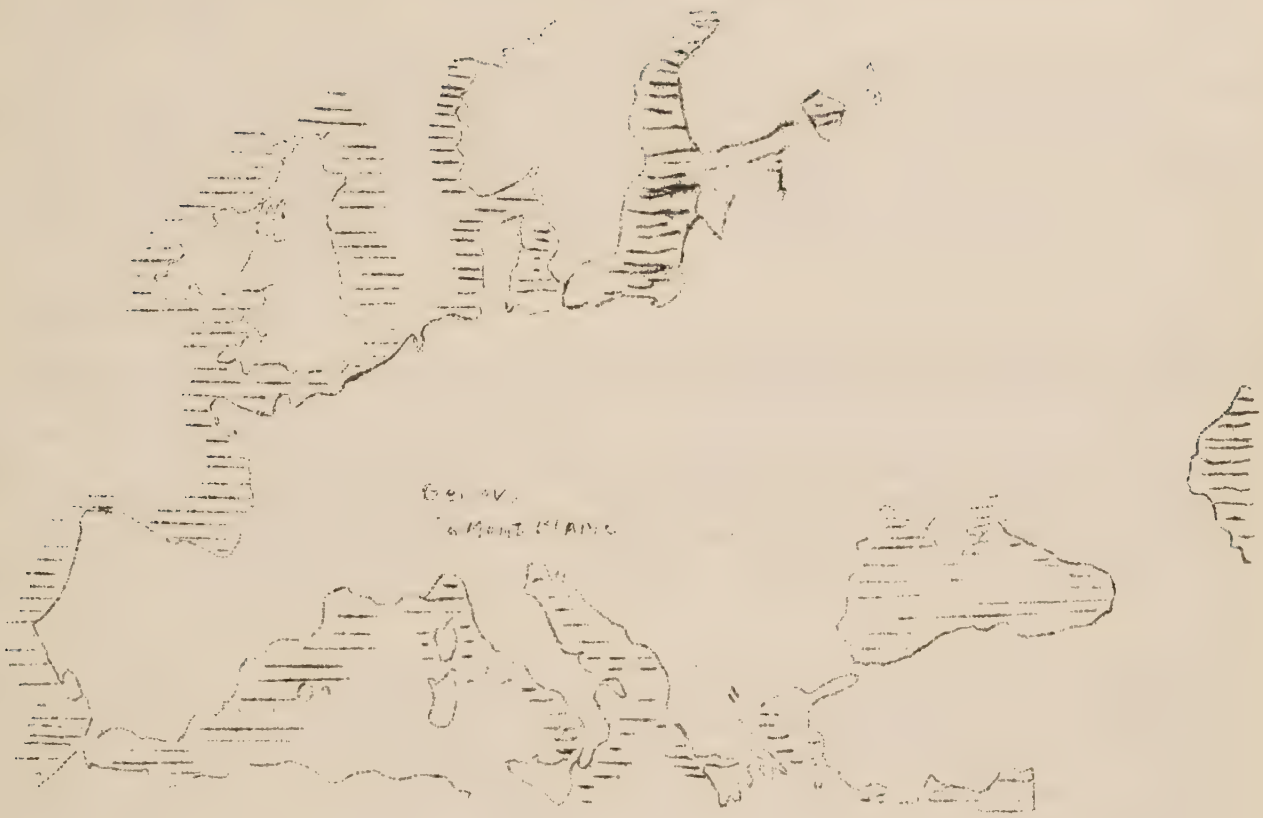
IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

1.- With this issue the Ecumenical Press Service combines the International Christian Press and Information Service (I.C.P.I.S.) and the Bulletin of the International Missionary Council. From now on, E.P.S. will include news items of missionary interest. - Unfortunately, owing to the strikes in America, the typing machines with small characters are still somewhere en route; as soon as we receive them more news will be put on the same number of pages.

2.- A new organisation is now on the list of the agencies under the auspices of which E.P.S. is produced: the World's Sunday School Association, founded in 1881, and whose headquarters are in New York and in Glasgow.

3.- From now on, our subscribers in the U.S.A. and Canada will receive the bulletin through our New York office. With this new arrangement it will be possible to receive the bulletin in a much shorter delay. North American subscriptions are to be sent to Miss Eleanor K. Browne, World Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

E.P.S.Geneva



THE RECONSTRUCTION MAP OF EUROPE

As the year 1946 comes to a close, it will be of interest to take a look at the map of Europe from the standpoint of the Department of Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid in the World Council of Churches. This programme of Christian Reconstruction undertaken by the World Council of Churches was begun before hostilities ceased. It is now at its very height, and it may be fully expected that even after peace treaties have been signed the reconstruction of the Christian forces will need to continue.

This review is made, as it were, from lofty Mont Blanc. As a matter of fact, Mont Blanc dominates the horizon of Geneva and thus in a very real fashion symbolizes the headquarters of the World Council of Churches.

Two very distinct and yet closely integrated phases of service are comprised in reconstruction - material aid and spiritual aid. The present programme is moving across the map from West to East and this review follows in the same direction. The 27 major states or nations in Europe in such a review group themselves into five general categories. It is recognised that categories III and IV overlap to a certain extent, for all the countries in both groups were war torn and most of them were also occupied by enemy forces. The population figures given for each of these five groups are from pre-war statistics.

1. The Neutral States. (Pop. 64,313,000)

There are six states that were not directly involved in the world war,

namely, Switzerland, Sweden, Eire, Spain, Portugal and Turkey. It is not correct to say that they were not affected by the war, but as neutral states they were not engaged in war and therefore are not in the receiving column so far as relief and reconstruction go.

These six are themselves sub-divided into two groups. Switzerland and Sweden are distinctly in the giving column, both for material and for spiritual aid. Their records are most generous ones. The other four, as far as reconstruction goes, have played no part. In reality they constitute the vacuums of the continent, for they are entirely without relationship to the task in which so many other nations are actively engaged.

II. Allies in the War.

There were two, Great Britain (Pop. 47,978,000) and Russia (Pop. 172,000,000). Each was engaged in the war, and each was a victim of Nazi fury and destruction, but from the standpoint of reconstruction each of these two is in a distinct category by itself. Of the one, U.S.S.R., it need only be said it suffered much and is undoubtedly far from normalcy. Little can be added to the meagre reports that through certain individuals have become known to the Christian world. The Reconstruction Department has had no relationship to the Soviet, either as a giving nation or a receiving nation.

On the other hand, Great Britain has been in the very heart of the enterprise from the beginning. Her suffering has been great, but her generous sacrificial fellowship has been even greater. A recent report indicates that the target of £ 1,000,000 towards which the British Churches have been aiming has now been more than half attained. In addition, there have been substantial values whose total has not thus far been computed of material aid made available on the continent. The spiritual resources have been even more significant. The final reports will reveal from British sources tremendous contributions of far reaching value.

III. Occupied Nations Recovering. (Pop. 80,431,000)

Six ought to be mentioned here in this connection - France, Belgium, Holland, Norway, Czechoslovakia and Denmark. They suffered much and are still in dire need. Each, however, is making good headway towards rehabilitation, so that it is anticipated that these six nations will no longer be included in the realm of needy countries, but will become helping countries in a reasonable time. It should be noted that Denmark, though occupied by the enemy, has at no time made an appeal for itself, but rather from the beginning has been at least to some extent a helping country. In addition to appreciable aid sent abroad it is now rendering an excellent service to some 200,000 German refugees that were imported into this little land during the Nazi occupation. Their material wants are being cared for and at the same time a notable Christian leadership is being provided, inclusive of both educational training and spiritual ministry.

IV. War-torn Countries still in Distress. (Pop. 215,777,000)

A group of 10 other nations are to be listed here - Finland, Poland, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Roumania. These are the most destitute nations in Europe to-day. The greatest physical needs are to be found here. While relative values cannot be completely stated, Roumania perhaps has some of the most destitute sections, while Italy may be regarded as suffering to a lessening degree, and all the way between these two extremes may be found varying stages of depletion and destruction. Germany's problems are numerous and different;

they undoubtedly will be slow of solution. Three countries, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Roumania have not as yet found it possible to set up within their midst representative reconstruction committees. It may take some time to get a satisfactory programme under way in several of these lands that will be inclusive of all churches. Meanwhile, for a good long time all 10 states within this group must receive substantial aid to bring them up to a bare subsistence level, and much encouragement with genuine Christian fellowship in their church activities.

V. Baltic States. (Pop. 5,515,000)

Finally, the three Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have so completely lost their indentity that but little is known concerning them, though some help has been given to many of the hopeless thousands of refugee people from these little lands who are scattered about in several parts of Europe and elsewhere around the world.

Some General Observations.

This sweep of Europe's states has necessarily been a rapid one, but the implication that the look has simply been from Mont Blanc is not to be pressed unduly, because the secretaries who compose the staff of the Department of Reconstruction have made intimate personal visits to each of these countries, except within the Russian zone. Moreover, almost all of them have had their representatives come to Geneva, some repeatedly, for personal consultations and various conferences.

At present it must be recognised that bad times are ahead from the material point of view for practically every country. The harvest of 1946 was below normal. UNRRA is already departing from many of these countries, and doubtless will soon withdraw from all of them. The most critical time since the outbreak of war 7 years ago is probably just ahead.Christian institutions which normally care for refugees and the victims of war have been rendered virtually impotent. Indeed, many of them no longer exist. Furthermore, from several large areas pastors and church workers, as well as their congregations, have been driven from their homes and find themselves without the means to care for people in need of spiritual and material aid.

While somewhat better physical conditions may be anticipated with the coming of spring, no general improvement can be hoped for until the harvest of 1947 is garnered and until transportation facilities over the entire continent are very much improved. Indeed, undoubtedly the winter of 1947/48 will still find resources very much depleted and conditions generally desperate. With demolished cities and destroyed homes, with churches and Christian institutions not yet restored, with equipment and staff far below normal for both material and spiritual development, the need for reconstruction will undoubtedly extend far beyond the signing of peace treaties.

But in the midst of these impoverished conditions the churches in many areas are working strongly, and even a spiritual awakening is bein experienced in some quarters - not least in the student world. There is a growing concern in regard to the morals of the younger generation.

Some ministries must continue. Prisoners of war and refugees will stand in need of care on the part of the churches for a long time to come. Literature cannot be quickly restored either for individuals or for organized groups.

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Theological faculties and libraries for seminaries will be delayed in their replenishment. Scholarships abroad must be provided in increasing numbers. The newly manifest spirit of evangelism must be cultivated and strengthened in every way.

So the map of Europe should challenge British churches to over-subscribe their goal of £1,000,000 and the churches of America to go beyond their present goal of $1,000,000 a month. Switzerland and Sweden, and increasingly other nations, are responding well and undoubtedly will make still further advances. A resurgence of life on a broken continent is appearing, and no fellowship is more conducive to its realisation than that which is provided in the name of Christ.

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